

# ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



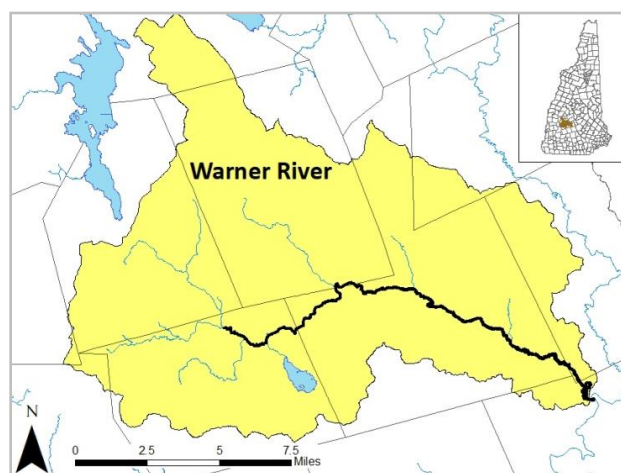
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## The Warner River

The Warner River flows west to east in central New Hampshire, draining to the Contoocook River in Hopkinton, which then flows northeast to the Merrimack River. The mainstem of the Warner River is 19 miles long, and in 2018 it was designated into the New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program along with a one-mile segment of the West Branch Warner River in Bradford. With a watershed drainage basin of over 148 square miles across Merrimack and Sullivan counties, the Warner River is an integral part of central New Hampshire's landscape, defining the five communities of Bradford, Sutton, Warner, Webster and Hopkinton through which it flows.



The river is largely free flowing with just three dams actively impounding water, and eight former dams either breached or in ruins. The large watershed is steep and rocky, producing fast-rising, high-volume runoff during severe storms. Water quality in the river is very good, supporting native brook trout; however, a few sites along the river are listed as impaired for supporting aquatic life due to pH. Protecting water quality is one of the many reasons for the Warner River's designation. Since 2016, regional volunteers have actively monitored water quality as part of the state's Volunteer River Assessment Program (VRAP).

### Geology

Glaciers were present in the Warner River valley during the Pleistocene Epoch 2.59 – 0.012 million years ago. When the glaciers retreated, they left behind till and through the process of ice melt, stratified deposits were created along streams, channels and lakes. These deposits were saturated with water and formed stratified-drift aquifers. The most expansive aquifers are found near the termination of the Warner River, as this area was once a glacial lake. However, aquifers are found along the entirety of the river channel and play a vital role in supplying municipal water for the towns of Hopkinton and Warner.

In the past, there has been minor commercial extraction of metamorphic minerals along the Warner River. Almandite, a common type of garnet, was mined and used primarily as an industrial abrasive. Soapstone was also extracted in Warner for use in stoves and hearthstones. Neither of these minerals is mined today.

### History

The Pennacooks were the area's first inhabitants. Artifacts such as projectile points, scraping tools, hearths and even human remains have been found in the river corridor. In the 1740s settlers built log cabins and a sawmill along the river, only to have them burned to the ground by the Pennacooks. It was not until after the French and

Indian War in the 1760s that a settlement could be established. Francis Davis established the first permanent sawmill in 1763 and mills became the backbone of the area's economy. Other industries which rely on waterpower sprang up and produced woolen cloth, hand-iron, clock weights, wooden boxes, gloves, shoes, bobbins, toys, wood turned chairs, baseball bats, crutches, cotton cloth, clothes pins, hubs, milk can stopples, excelsior, transformers, and special power supplies.



A circa 1890s Warner Historical Society photograph of the falls at Waterloo and the Waterloo Covered Bridge.

Noteworthy historical sites occurring in the river corridor include the Dalton, Waterloo and Bement covered bridges, as well as the Lower Warner Meeting House, all of which are listed on the National Historic Register. The Waterloo District, with its 24 houses, cemetery, school house, railroad depot and mill building, is also listed on the National Historic Register.

### **Wildlife, Habitat and Vegetation**

The Warner River forms a natural greenway corridor between multiple large protected open space areas, including the Chandler Reservation in Warner, the Warner Town Forest, and the Kearsarge Mountain State Forest, which stretches into Sutton, Wilmot, Andover and Salisbury and includes Rollins and Winslow state parks. The river corridor lies within the Quabbin-to-Cardigan Partnership region, one of the largest remaining intact, interconnected, ecologically significant forests in central New England and providing an important north-south travel corridor for wildlife. More than 20% of the land area within the river corridor has been identified as the highest ranked wildlife habitat in the state as noted in the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan. The river corridor is an excellent location for observing wildlife such as moose, black bear, fisher, and bobcat due to the proximity of large areas of conserved open space. Rare, threatened and endangered plant and animal species within the river corridor include sclerolepis, found in only two locations in New England, small whorled pogonia, American water-alwort, the common loon, and Blanding's turtle. Over two-thirds of streams surveyed in the watershed also support the natural reproduction of native brook trout.

### **Recreation, Boating and Fishing**

The Warner River corridor offers a wide variety of recreation opportunities such as wildlife observation and walking in the Bradford Pines Natural Area, hiking and hunting in the Mink Hills, and organized sports at Warner's Riverside Park. A section of the [Concord - Lake Sunapee Rail Trail](#) follows the Warner River offering walking and biking opportunities with future expansion planned. For drivers, the Currier & Ives Scenic Byway travels from Davisville to Warner, including views of the river and Joppa covered bridge. For winter recreationalists, a state primary snowmobile trail crosses the river on Joppa Road via the Dalton covered bridge.

Fishing, kayaking, canoeing and swimming are popular in the Warner River. Seasonally variable flows offer whitewater paddling unique to this part of the state including numerous class IV rapids and a three-foot dam sluice. American Whitewater identifies the Warner River as a highly popular destination due to its large watershed, long whitewater season, and incredible in-stream features. The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department's Freshwater Fishing Guide claims the Warner River to be an excellent location for brook and rainbow trout fishing, with varied fish habitat and good access to the river.

### **For More Information**

For further information about the New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program visit the NHDES website at <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/>, or contact the Rivers Coordinator, 29 Hazen Drive, PO Box 95, Concord, NH 03302-0095; (603) 271-2959; [riversprogram@des.nh.gov](mailto:riversprogram@des.nh.gov).